

## True Vine

29 4 18

Almighty God,  
who through your only begotten Son Jesus Christ  
have overcome death and opened to us  
the gate of everlasting life:  
grant that, as your grace going ever before us  
you put into our minds good desires,  
so by your continual help  
we may bring them into good effect.

Our text may be found in today's gospel – John chapter 15 and verse 1:

**' I am the true vine.'**

How many 'I am' statements are to be found in John's gospel and how many can you name ?

- |   |                                     |        |
|---|-------------------------------------|--------|
| 1 | I am the bread of life              | 6 v35  |
| 2 | I am the light of the world         | 8 v12  |
| 3 | I am the door                       | 10 v9  |
| 4 | I am the good shepherd              | 10 v11 |
| 5 | I am the resurrection and the life  | 11 v25 |
| 6 | I am the way the truth and the life | 14 v6  |
| 7 | I am the true vine                  | 15 v1  |

They are wonderful statements of truth, images that clearly express the nature and character of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Door, light, way, bread, shepherd, vine – and most significant of all this Eastertide – resurrection. But if last week we looked at the idea of Jesus as good shepherd, then let's try to understand today what he means by saying he is 'the true vine.'

First and foremost is what the idea of vine and vineyard would mean to his original, Jewish audience. The vineyard and the vine therein were images of Israel. How many and varied are the references in the Old Testament to this idea.

For example:

Isaiah 5 v1 – 7 – the vineyard of the Lord is the house of Israel.

Jeremiah 2 v21 – 'Yet I planted you a choice vine'.

Ezekiel 15 likens Israel to the vine.

Hosea 10 v1 says that 'Israel is a luxuriant vine'.

Psalms 80 v8 proclaims 'Thou didst bring a vine out of Egypt'.

The vine became a symbol of the nation of Israel: an emblem on the coins of the Maccabees and in the Temple in Jerusalem a great golden vine hung on the front of the Holy Place. So when Jesus teaches that he is the true vine, he is making a claim to be, root and branch, authentic Israel – Jesus is claiming to be the real thing.

Secondly, it is well worth noting the powerful teaching embodied in the imagery of the vine. The tremendous potential for growth; the need for proper care and pruning; branches that are fruitless cut away and care and effort to trim over time

to encourage the best possible fruit-bearing. And if Jesus is the vine and we, his followers, are the branches, then the reason we can bear fruit in due season is the fact that we are properly connected to him. The sap flows through him to us: it is his Holy Spirit that empowers us to do the work to which we are called.

Jesus, then, is the true vine; God is the vine grower; and we are the branches of that vine. It is an interesting trinity of responsibility. God the Father who manages the growth; God the Son who embodies the growth; we the branches which bear the fruit of the growth. God-willing may we well do so.

I hope that helps. As ever, what and who Jesus is makes us who we are. Sadly, not all who are called to be fruit-bearing do bear fruit but, thankfully, if we are properly connected by the way we live our Christian lives, then we will be gifted to gift others by what we try to do for them.

I have spoken in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,  
Amen.

*Preached at the Eucharist*

*St Bartholomew's, Dinard*

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G: Sermons 37 :True vine

